DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 390 784 SO 025 749

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TITLE Magazine Geography: Using Magazine Pictures To Enhance Social Studies Instruction.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Area Studies; Culture; Foreign Countries; *Geographic Concepts; Geographic Regions; *Geography; *Geography Instruction; *Mass Media Use; Media Adaptation; *Periodicals; Printed Materials; Regional Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

This lesson focuses on student use of magazine pictures of a region in Australia to understand the region and discover more about it. The students begin by mental mapping of the area to discover what they already know, then proceed to explore the pictures for verification or for new ideas which they had not considered previously. This is an integrated activity including reading, language arts, and social studies time. Webbing also may be used to graphically organize student ideas. The graphic organizers are used throughout the unit. A Venn diagram also could be used to consider the similarities of the Australian region with other areas the students have studied. (EH)

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MAGAZINE GEOGRAPHY:

USING MAGAZINE PICTURES TO ENHANCE SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION

WILLIAM P. FITZHUGH

Like me, you've probably enjoyed the "National Geographic" magazine or other travel publication for years. I've been collecting back issues and others have been given to me. These magazines open up a world of adventure for students. Even with today's video technology, pictures of far off places still offer excellent learning opportunities for students and teachers. These magazine pictures motivate children. Children see a picture and want to learn more. Vocabulary development is greatly enhanced by using magazine pictures. Fortunately, these magazines are usually free and organizing pictures is easily accomplished.

I have collected magazine pictures from old issues for every social studies unit I teach. These pictures make excellent bulletin board material. Individual students can use a single picture as a story starter. Important aspects of the picture can be used as visual clues in vocabulary development. These same pictures can be used as part of integrated reading in order to teach reading skills such as blends, digraphs, and vowel sounds. With a little thought magazine picture can be used in many more exciting and innovative ways. The pictures are recycled from year to year. I don'y laminated them.

In this lesson small groups of children will use a set of pictures from a

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region of Australia to understand the region and discover more about this region. Each small group will receive a set of pictures, markers, and chart paper. All of these are delivered in a large plastic bag. (Plastic bags make great, cheap storage containers.)

As a warm-up each group is asked to write down what they already know about Australia (or you use the region you are studying) This is a kind of mental mapping. The children brain storm and make a group list. I usually give each group an outline map of Australia to focus their thinking processes. Each group then takes turns reporting their list to the whole class. I act as recorder and write the entire class's ideas on a chart paper. Mental mapping is important in vocabulary and concept development. It's also important to discover misconceptions children have and and I can correct these misconceptions during instruction.

After passing out the plastic bags, each group begins investigating the information presented in the pictures. They look for verification of their ideas and new information. We have as reference list of social studies elements hanging in front of the room. These "ABC's for Social Studies" give general categories of social studies terms which help children focus their thinking. The class list is not the same one attached to this paper. Using these terms often helps children become more efficient social studies investigators.

Each group uses pictures to add to their list of words reflecting the region under study. I circulate and ask prompting questions. This is

especially important when children miss really important picture clues. I leave the captions on the pictures. Often these captions relate more information and clarify the picture. Reading captions and interpreting pictures is also an important reading skill.

I spend an entire morning doing this activity. It includes reading, language arts, and social studies time. This is an integrated activity because children are learning social studies, interpreting pictures, reading captions, making decisions, sorting data, presenting data in a usable form, and reporting their findings orally. We make use a many kinds of graphic organizers which were first used in reading instruction.

After working for a while children, use a graphic organizer to display their data. A web is convenient and each group needs to decide which categories will be included in their web, I often use the five fundamental themes of geography: location, place, movement, environment, and regions. The ABC's of Social Studies chart hanging in the room offers many other categories for student use, too.

Each group will present their findings to the class. Classmates are encouraged to listen politely and ask questions. I, too, ask questions of the group. The graphic organizers are hung in the room to be used throughout the unit. The group will decide where their region is on the map of the world. In the case of Australia they will decide which region of Australia they have been investigating. This is important because Australia, like the United States, is huge and has many distinct regions.

We then use a Venn diagram to compare what we have learned about Australia with what we already know about the Chesapeake Bay region of Maryland. The Chesapeake Bay unit is usually the first unit I teach. We use our own region as a springboard to learn more about other regions. It helps students understand new regions when they have their own community/neighborhood/region as a starting point.

After using pictures for group work, I distribute pictures to use as story starters. Students must write short paragraphs of 5 sentences about the pictures. The pictures offer stimulus. Children have opportunities to write using new vocabulary. Reading their writing helps me understand if students themselves understand the vocabulary and concepts presented. Paragraphs and pictures are hung as bulletin board displays.

Some children need phonetic review of blends, digraphs, or vowel sounds. Using pictures and circling distinct parts helps students review reading skills as well as develop new vocabulary. Pictures offer added emphasis.

Magazine Geography offers visual stimulus for student vocabulary/concept development in the social studies. It is an activity based social studies concept. It also offers teachers an apportunity to integrate reading skills with social studies. I use it because its fun!

Here are some ABC's For SOCIAL STUDIES

A art adaptation anthropology animals architecture agriculture ancestors

B building birthrate

C culture clothing currency commerce cuisine communicate climate crops

Disease diet death

E education ecology environment economics engineering entertainment

F food folklore

G government GNP geography

H history holidays health housing

I industry income infant mortality

J jobs

K

L location language literature landscape landform life expectancy

M map movement money market music mortality manufacturing

N natural increase natural resources neighbors

O oral history

P perceptions philosophy politics population place

Q

R royalty region rural religion race

S social class sports sex roles sociology

T technology transportation tourism

U urban

V vehicles vegetation

W waterbodies weather weapons wildlife

X, Y, Z zoology